

The other Bogaerts brother: The journey of Jair Bogaerts

By [Joon Lee](#)  [@iamjoonlee](#) on Jan 27 2014, 9:00a



Jair Bogaerts, twin brother of Red Sox prospect Xander Bogaerts, now works as a sports agent. - Photo by Kelly O'Connor

While Xander Bogaerts has already won a World Series, Jair Bogaerts is ready to take on the challenge of succeeding in the competitive world of sports agency.

4

The van was already running late and Jair Bogaerts, the twin brother of [Red Sox](#) prospect [Xander Bogaerts](#), was rushing to get dressed. Bogaerts, a few minutes behind his other teammates to get on the van, rushed to gather his things in preparation for another day during his first season in the [Chicago Cubs](#) organization.

As he prepared to leave, Bogaerts heard the voice of Bobby Mitchell, the manager of Arizona Fall League Cubs, the rookie league affiliate.

"Hey Bo," Mitchell said, "Can you step into my office?"

Bogaerts, half undressed, stood puzzled.

"Yeah, sure," Bogaerts said with trepidation.

Bogaerts followed Mitchell into his office, not yet dressed for the day's work.

"Have a seat, Bo," Mitchell said.

Bogaerts was confused. "Shouldn't this be a quick conversation?" he mused.

"No have a seat," Mitchell said.

The room stood quiet as an unusual tension filled the room.

"You know, it's the beginning of the season," Mitchell said with pause. "I have some bad news. We've got to let you go."

Bogaerts sat in his seat, shocked. "What? Are you serious?" he said.

"Yeah, Bo," Mitchell said. "We gotta let you go."

★ ★ ★



Xander, Chandra and Jair Bogaerts atop the Green Monster following the twins' first contract with the Red Sox. (Courtesy of the Bogaerts family)

When Jair and Xander Bogaerts signed with the Red Sox out of Aruba in 2009 at the age of 16, the fraternal twins set their sights on the prize together. The two wanted to be in the big leagues at the same time. However after their first year in professional baseball, the path for the two natives of San Nicolaas, Aruba split.

"At the beginning, we both thought we were going to be in the big leagues at the same time but he made the jump really quick when he played his first season in the US before me," Jair said. "By the end of his first season, he made the jump all the way to Greenville (the Single-A affiliate of the Red Sox)."

While Xander flourished in his first season playing pro baseball with the Dominican Summer League Red Sox, Jair struggled, hitting .170 with two home runs, 20 RBI, .253 on-base percentage and .242 slugging percentage. As Xander made the jump from the DSL to Greenville, Jair stayed with the DSL Red Sox for a second season in 2011.

Jair made major strides in his second season, hitting .288 with a .387 OBP, leading the team with a .404 SLG and two homers. The older Bogaerts twin looked to be making strides towards fulfilling his dream of playing in the majors.

Rafa Nieves, an agent with Beverly Hill Sports Council, signed Bogaerts following his second season in the Dominican Summer League after approaching him on Facebook. Bogaerts talked to his mother before making the decision to officially sign on with Nieves.

"She told me to hold up a little bit, wait a little bit," Jair said. "As the days passed by, we just got a great relationship and I thought there was no doubt that I should sign with [Rafa]. That's how it went down. I signed with him during Spring Training camp in the Dominican before I got to the US."

From there, the relationship between Bogaerts and Nieves grew into more than a business partnership.

"[Jair]'s a very humble, honest, does stuff the right way," Nieves said of Jair. "He is charismatic. As you get to know him a little more, he's a great guy. He's one of those guys when they walk in a room, they light it up. I just got an affection for him and we became really close friends."

Not long after signing with Nieves, Bogaerts was sent to the Cubs to complete the trade that sent Theo Epstein to the Windy City. The trade hit everyone in the Bogaerts family hard.

"It was pretty hard," Jair said in July. "I really couldn't believe it when I got traded to the Cubs and my brother couldn't either. We just had to live with it. We couldn't do anything about that so we just had to deal with it. It was what it was. We had to play baseball and support each other as much. We would just call each other every day and make sure everything was alright. It would just make everything better."

"I was surprised, definitely," Xander said. "Jair being traded was the first trade in our family. It was definitely not easy. The first year we signed, we played together and then the second year, we became separate. It was definitely not something that we were used to, not being at the same place at the same time."

Unbeknownst to him at the time, Jair Bogaerts was about to begin a new chapter in his life.





Jair prepared during the offseason in preparation to take another step forward in the development of his baseball career after spending the first two seasons of his pro baseball career in the Dominican Summer League. The fateful meeting came with Mitchell at a crucial time of Bogaerts' development as a baseball player and brought his life to a screeching halt.

"I can still remember like it was yesterday," Jair said. "When I got released, the first person I called and talked to was my mom. I can still picture that text I sent to her. I was like, Mom, I can't believe it."

"I was very surprised," Nieves said. "He had only been with the Cubs for only a few weeks, maybe a month or two. He just got there and he was not even being given a chance to have even one season with the team. That was very shocking because he got released at the end of Extended Spring Training. I understand sometimes that there are guys that come in from the draft that need to play. I've seen it a lot where the teams end up in a position like that and they just send the player back to the Dominican Summer League. [Jair] was eligible to play down there for a third year. It was shocking but this is baseball and this is part of the business."

Jair sought the advice of his mother, Sandra Brown. Brown, a social worker in Aruba who raised the twins and their older sister Sandra on her own, listened to sorrows of her son.

"I was able to get him to vent his feelings," Brown said. "I got him to let it all out, talked to him, kept him encouraged and told him, 'Don't give up, let's keep trying. Let's check different avenues so it was a whole, long process to think about what would be the next step.'"

"My mom has been there since I got traded to the Cubs," Jair said. "That was also a long process for me to get over being traded. She was a huge influence on that. She was always there, making sure I'm alright, making sure I feel at home. When I got released, she was there at the airport waiting for me. I just broke down and she was there for me. She was my shoulder to cry on when I came back home."

For a while, Jair held the release against the Cubs organization.

"Man, I hated the Cubs," Jair chuckled. "I hated the Cubs, really, really bad. Right now, I can definitely say that I'm over it, but up until a few weeks ago, it was really hard. I would still go back and think about it. It was really tough until a couple of weeks ago."

"That was probably one of the toughest things that you could go through as a player," Xander said. "I was there to support him, but it was definitely a tough, tough time for him. We always talk every day so whenever he needed someone to talk to, I was there."



Rafa Nieves and Jair Bogaerts have formed a close relationship since the former began to represent the latter. (Courtesy of Jair Bogaerts)

Not soon after hearing the news of Bogaerts' release, Nieves shot him an offer to become an agent at the agency.

"I thought that he's got the energy, he's got the time, he's young, he's driven, he's honest, because that's another big thing in this industry," Nieves said. "There's a lot agents out there that are not as honest, they're trying to make a quick buck, but he's not written that way. His mother, Sandra, did a great job raising him, Xander and Chandra and I think he's got all the tools to make it in this business."

Bogaerts hesitated initially at the job offer.

"I was only 19 so all I had was baseball," Jair said. "That was all I knew, that's all I thought about, that's all I think of. Everything was really baseball, baseball, baseball."

Instead of taking the offer right away, Bogaerts decided to continue pursuing tryouts with major league teams in an effort to catch on for an opportunity somewhere. Bogaerts tried out with the [St. Louis Cardinals](#), [San Diego Padres](#), [Houston Astros](#) and the Red Sox. Bogaerts was also in the mix to join Team Netherlands for the [World Baseball Classic](#).

None of the workouts led to any offers for Bogaerts. Bogaerts then heard about an opportunity to try out for an independent league team in New Jersey in April, 2013. The tryout went well and the team told him to stay to fight for a spot during Spring Training for a spot on the roster. However, before he could do so, he needed to head back to Aruba for his sister's wedding.

When he came back to New Jersey after the wedding, Bogaerts received a surprise.

"They invited me to the team's Spring Training and said to me, 'We just signed a couple of guys for your spot, so there really isn't a roster spot for you.' I thought to myself, 'What am I doing here?'"

At that point, Jair needed to make a change. Baseball was not working out. Bogaerts flew back to Aruba, got in contact with Nieves, who told him to get his mind off baseball.

"[Rafa] was really a huge influence for me for stepping away from brother and becoming an agent," Bogaerts said. "I flew out to LA and that's when it really started."

While working to become an agent, Jair began to fly to watch Xander play.

"Since the first day I got released, I've always been there," Jair said. "In Salem. I surprised him at the Futures Game in 2012, then I visited him in Salem. Pretty much since I got released, I visited him all the way until he got to [the World Series](#). It's not been like all of a sudden, I'm there. I was there from the beginning."

"It was awesome [to have him around]," Xander said. "My brother is someone that is really close to me. I can't be closer to anyone like I am to him, we were born on the same day. Definitely good to have him around a lot."

A few words from Nieves solidified the decision for Jair.

"Are you going to play in the Netherlands for \$2000 dollars a month until you're 30, when nobody will want you to play for them?" Nieves asked Jair. "What are you going to be after that? A Little League Instructor?"

From there, the journey to become an agent began.



It was not until Jair turned down an invite to Spring Training with the **Orioles** that he committed his full energy into his journey in sports agency, but the 21-year old has already signed four clients. Brown believes that Bogaerts' people skills have helped him get off to a good start.

"Jair is someone that is good with people," Brown said. "He is a people's person. He is very communicative, he is very outgoing. When I came to him and said, "This job as a player-agent was cut out for you," I said it was because there is a certain attitude that is needed for that job and you can see that he portrays it."

After making the transition off the field, Bogaerts has immediately seen a difference between the way front office executive talk to players and agents.

"Front office guys are really straight to the point," Bogaerts said. "They'll tell you as it is in the moment. Compared to my experience as a player, they'll tell you, 'Hey, you coming into Spring, come into shape, you'll be fighting for a spot in High-A or Double-A.' They'll try to get you pumped up for you to come with your best performance and then when you come into camp, you give your best performance to try to make the team. As an agent, they'll tell you straight forward, this guy is going to be on this team, he's going to be doing this, this and this."

Now that he's off the field and out of his brother's shadow, Jair has been able to enjoy Xander's success on the field more.

"Xander's success would have affected me more if I was still a player," Jair said. "People would be saying to me, 'Hey your brother is 20, he's in the big leagues, he got a World Series ring, where are you at 20?'"

"One day, you're looking at him as a 20-year old kid in Triple-A and the next day, he's a World Series champion. It all just happened so quick. From waiting for the phone call for him to get called up to the big leagues to winning a World Series, it was a priceless moment."

More: [Xander Bogaerts leads nine Red Sox prospects on MLB.com's top 100](#)

While Brown is extremely proud of where both of her boys have gotten to this point, she believes there is still more for both of them to accomplish.

"You are glad when your kids are making progress and as I tell everyone, they each have set goals and they have to meet each goal," Brown said. "Sometimes, you are like, oh, Xander made it to the majors, that was always a goal. The goal was to make it to the majors, but we didn't expect to reach the ring so fast but, it's all about the process and the part of the plan. When you work hard for something, you get it. That's the same I say with Jair. Make sure to keep focused and keep doing what you are doing. Put a lot of hard work in it and you will get where you have to go."

While Xander is currently represented by agent Scott Boras, Jair wants to represent his brother in the future.

"Of course I want to represent my brother at some point," Jair said. "Then again, it is his decision. We're not little kids anymore. Whatever his decision is, I have to respect it. If it happens that I represent him along the way, that would be a plus for us.

"I'm pretty proud," Jair said. "I would want to represent him, be his agent. Everyone wants to be his agent. Hopefully in a few years, he's a superstar and he goes forward from there on."

Ultimately, Jair wants to be the best agent he can be for his clients.

"My ultimate goal as an agent is to be there for my guys, for my guys to trust me enough to do whatever with their eyes closed," Jair said. "A big goal is to have big league guys, big money and be successful. Relationships, however, mean a lot more, not just having a guy and just doing his business. Some people don't have a relationship. For me, it's really having a relationship with my guys. To me, that means a lot more."

Source: <http://www.overthemonster.com/2014/1/27/5348334/the-other-bogaerts-brother-the-journey-of-jair-bogaerts>